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Disorder: Rethinking Hoarding Inside and Outside the Museum

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Disorder: Rethinking Hoarding Inside and Outside the Museum

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Abstract

Disorder: Rethinking Hoarding Inside and Outside the Museum

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Hoarding tends to appear in museum studies scholarship primarily as a foil for "proper" museological collecting. Yet hoarding has attracted a constellation of assumptions and meanings. In popular discourse, hoarding is often perceived as a behavior learned from a life of deprivation, while clinical discourse about hoarding seeks to determine how it should be classified in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. These multiple perspectives inform the ways in which hoarding, and by extension collecting and museum practices, can be defined and understood. This report, then, examines how the idea of the museum is incorporated, reworked, or even rejected in three case studies of hoarding: art-historical approaches to Andy Warhol's hoarding habits; *Clean House*, a television show that cleans and redecorates families' cluttered homes; and *Hoarders*, a television show that pairs hoarders with psychiatrists and professional organizers. In each case study, the discourse surrounding the hoarder attempts to bring hoarding in line with "acceptable" collecting practices. At the same time, this particular discourse competes with other messages about the cultural role of collecting, generating a dialogue with important implications for collecting institutions about acquisition and appraisal, curatorial and archival bias, and institutional identity.

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What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered.[1]

INTRODUCTION

Museum studies scholars have produced a vast amount of literature that defines and interrogates collecting in theory and practice. They have, however, paid relatively little sustained attention to other kinds of acquisition and accumulation. Instead, these behaviors, when they are mentioned at all, function primarily as foils for "normal" collecting practices. Russell Belk, for example, defines collecting as

> the process of actively, selectively, and passionately acquiring and possessing things removed from ordinary use and perceived as part of a set of non-identical objects or experiences…collecting [is distinguished] from hoarding, miserliness, possessive accumulating (the "packrat" tendency), and simple acquisitiveness. While these behaviors are generally evaluated negatively as aberrant forms of consumerism, collecting is generally evaluated positively.[2]

For Jean Baudrillard,

> The concept of collecting...is distinct from that of accumulating. The latter—the piling up of old papers, the stockpiling of items of food—is an inferior stage of collecting...The next stage is that of the serial accumulation of identical objects. Collecting proper emerges at first with an orientation to the cultural: it aspires to

[1] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Fortune of the Republic and Other American Addresses* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1889), 16.

> discriminate between objects, privileging those which have some exchange value or which are also "objects" of conservation, of commerce, of social ritual, of display...While ceaselessly referring to one another, they admit within their orbit the external dimension of social and human intercourse.[3]

In this context, then, hoarding is perceived in opposition to collecting, or, alternatively, as an extension of it so extreme as to be perverse, even inhuman. Susan Stewart, for example, follows the turn-of-the-century psychologist and philosopher William James in comparing a hoarder's accumulation and arrangement of his acquisitions to that of a California wood rat, whose possessions, though arranged in a pattern around his nest, "are without seriality, without relation to one another or to a context of acquisition. Such accumulation is obviously not connected to the culture and the economy in the same way that the collection proper is connected to such structures." For James, "'the miser' par excellence of the popular imagination and of melodrama, the monster of squalor and misanthropy, is simply one of these mentally deranged persons...His instincts, especially that of ownership, are insane." Pearce concludes, then, that "the miser's collection depends upon a refusal of differentiation while the hobbyist's collection depends upon an acceptance of differentiation as its very basis for existence."[4] She furthermore diagnoses hoarding as an animalistic behavior, opposing it to the intellectual activity of the human

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[2] Russell Belk, *Collecting in a Consumer Society* (London: Routledge, 1995), 141.
[3] Jean Baudrillard, "The System of Collecting," in *Cultures of Collecting*, eds. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 22.
[4] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 153-4.

collector: "Herein lies the difference between the collections of humans and the collections of pack rats."[5]

What museum studies scholar Sharon Macdonald has noted about collecting, however, might easily apply to hoarding as well: that it attracts such moral judgments "should not be regarded as evidence of its actual moral status but instead of the fact that it is a culturally significant and morally charged activity which is about more than the mere gathering together of things."[6] Indeed, hoarding has attracted a complex constellation of assumptions and meanings. In popular discourse and understanding, for example, hoarding is often perceived as a behavior learned from a life of deprivation. Brad and Ted Klontz's articulation of this common assumption is representative:

> Many survivors of the Depression…developed hoarding behaviors that persisted even in times of prosperity. Having lived through a period of such utter scarcity, deprivation, and uncertainty, they developed an intense and irrational fear of being once again wiped out and left with nothing. So they prepared by stuffing money under mattresses, building up stores of food, saving everything from scrap metals to fuel oil. And, like so many other disordered behaviors, these hoarding tendencies often got passed down to family members. We know many children of Depression-era hoarders who became hoarders or underspenders by modeling their parents' habits.[7]

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[5] Stewart, *On Longing*, 153.
[6] Susan Macdonald, "Collecting Practices," in *A Companion to Museum Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 83.
[7] Brad Klontz and Ted Klontz, *Mind over Money: Overcoming the Money Disorders That Threaten Our Financial Health* (New York; Broadway Books, 2009), 107-8.

In the popular imagination, hoarding is, moreover, positioned on a continuum of consumption. Anyone, it is thought, could turn into a hoarder if pushed or enticed far enough by modern society's relentless messages to consume, purchase, and accumulate. As Carina Chocano writes about a spate of television shows about hoarding, "Watching the televised hoarders gingerly scale the hostile terrain of their modest rooms…it's hard not to get anxious and apocalyptic about materialism and junk culture…We judge them, but we're like them too."[8] And for Chris Jones, the people featured on these shows are "even scarier because most of the rest of us could pretty easily find ourselves under similar burdens. Blame Don Draper or our culture of consumption, but the hard truth is, our lives have become increasingly tied to our possessions."[9]

The clinical discourse about hoarding, on the other hand, presents another view of hoarding which seeks, in part, to dispel commonly held assumptions about hoarding by both museum studies scholars and the general public. For psychologists, compulsive hoarding is generally thought to be defined by the acquisition of, and failure to discard, a large number of possessions; clutter that precludes activities for which living spaces were designed; and significant distress or impairment in functioning caused by the hoarding.[10] Although hoarding is currently categorized as a subtype of obsessive-compulsive disorder

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[8] Carina Chocano, "Underneath Every Hoarder Is a Normal Person Waiting to Be Dug Out," *New York Times Magazine*, June 17, 2011.
[9] Chris Jones, "Why We Hoard," *Esquire* 153:4 (April 2010).
[10] Randy Frost and Tamara Hartl, "A Cognitive-Behavioral Model of Compulsive Hoarding," *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 34:4 (1996), 341-50; 341. Also see Randy Frost and Rachel Gross, "The Hoarding of Possessions," *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 31:4 (1993), 367-381; Gail Skeketee and Randy Frost, "Compulsive Hoarding: Current Status of the Research," *Clinical Psychology Review* 23 (2003), 905-927; and

in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), there is a growing consensus that hoarding should be included as a separate disorder in the next version of the DSM.[11] Brain scans of those who hoard reveal decreased activity in areas related to memory, decision making, spatial orientation, and emotions.[12] Hoarding, moreover, is associated with low marriage rates, social anxiety and withdrawal, and dependent personality traits.[13] From a clinical perspective, then, hoarding is a psychological, perhaps genetically influenced, disorder, and not primarily the result of the pressures of a culture of abundance or deprivation. Indeed, contrary to popular beliefs about Depression-era hoarders, Randy Frost, one of the leading investigators of hoarding, observes that "our findings have failed to support the relationship between hoarding and early deprivation experiences. Hoarders were no more likely to report financial deprivation during childhood than nonhoarders."[14] Frost also debunks the myth that, unlike collectors, hoarders have no sentimental attachment to their objects, claiming that it runs counter to anecdotal and empirical evidence that one of the

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Jessica Grisham and David Barlow, "Compulsive Hoarding: Current Research and Theory," *Journal of Psychopathology and Behaviorial Assessment* 27:1 (2005), 45-52.

[11] Randy Frost, *Stuff: Compulsive Hoarding and the Meaning of Things* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010), 14; 100.

[12] Jessie Sholl, *Dirty Secret: A Daughter Comes Clean About Her Mother's Compulsive Hoarding* (Gallery, 2010), 22-3.

[13] David Tolin, Randy Frost, and Gail Skeketee, "An open trial of cognitive-behavioral therapy for compulsive hoarding," *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 34 (2007), 1461-1470; 1462.

[14] Frost and Hartl, "Cognitive Behavioral Model," 344.

primary features of compulsive hoarding is, in fact, an excessive emotional attachment to possessions, even seemingly worthless ones.[15]

Even more, Frost argues that hoarders view many of their possessions as extensions of themselves:

> The possessions are part of their owner and are imbued with human-like qualities. When other people touch, move or use the possessions the hoarder feels violated, as if they've lost control of their environment...Possessions were seen as a part of the self and getting rid of them was like losing a close friend.[16]

That possessions define the self is almost a commonplace in the scholarship about collecting.[17] These findings that hoarders, too, claim identity in their hoards make problematic museological attempts to distinguish hoarding from collecting on the grounds of identity formation.

According to Sharon Macdonald,

> Collecting—including the assembly, preservation, and display of collections—is fundamental to the idea of the museum, even if not all "museums" directly engage in it. Equally, I suggest, the idea of the museum has become fundamental to collecting practices beyond the museum.[18]

By this, she means that the idea of the museum, and museological practices and strategies, particularly as they have developed from early modern European cabinets of

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[15] Frost and Hartl, "Cognitive-Behavioral Model," 342.
[16] Frost and Hartl, "Cognitive Behavioral Model," 347.
[17] For examples, see Baudrillard, "System of Collecting," 12; and Macdonald, "Collecting Practices," 89-90.
[18] Macdonald, "Collecting Practices," 81.

curiosities, exercise a profound influence on all collecting practices. To what extent, then, do "collecting practices" include hoarding? How does hoarding test the boundaries of collecting, as well as, if Macdonald's claim is accurate, of what is museological?

To my knowledge, there has been little research yet done that brings together, in equal measure, the manifold meanings of and approaches to hoarding.[19] Yet these multiple perspectives on hoarding inform the ways in which hoarding, and by extension collecting and museum practices, can be defined and understood. In this paper, then, I will examine how the idea of the museum is incorporated, reworked, or even rejected in three case studies of extra-museological hoarding: Andy Warhol's hoarding habits and the struggle to incorprate them into museum spaces; *Clean House*, a comedic TV show that appropriates the museum's role in training discerning consumers as it cleans and redecorates families' cluttered houses; and *Hoarders*, a "reality-horror"[20] TV show that pairs hoarders with psychiatrists and professional organizers who try to help them overcome immediate crises brought on by their hoarding, even as the show itself suggests the futility of such efforts towards the sanitization and containment fundamental to museum operation.

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[19] Nevertheless, a few scholars have observed the importance of doing so. Jane Glick and David Halperin, for example, write, "Collection and accumulation should not be examined under a lens totally focused on their pathological dimensions…The acquisition of objects is overdetermined, and it can be understood only if intrapsychic, historial, and a wide variety of other factors are considered. Thus, the individual must be examined within specific historical contexts that may make the acquisition of many objects normative, e.g., the hoards of antiquities and objets d'art accumulated by wealthy Englishment or Americans during grand tours of Europe, or the Tulipmania which swept Holland during the seventeenth century." See "Collection and Accumulation," in *Substance Abuse: A Comprehensive Textbook*, eds. Joyce Lowinson, Pedro Ruiz, Robert Millman, and John Langrod (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1997), 355.

In each case study, the discourse surrounding the hoarder attempts to bring hoarding in line with "acceptable" collecting practices. At the same time, these case studies are multivalent, and this particular discourse competes with other messages about the value and meaning of acquisition and possessions. I argue that it is precisely this multivalence that is of value, and that while attempts to segregate collecting from hoarding or from their circumstance-specific particularities are reductive and perhaps ultimately futile, *studying* these attempts can usefully illuminate social and institutional ideologies. Finally, if, as Macdonald suggests, the museum is always implicated in instances of extra-museological collecting, so extra-museological collecting is also implicated in the museum. I will conclude, then, by investigating some of the ways in which the negotiation of acceptable personal collecting practices can impact museums' and other collecting institutions' practices of acquisition and appraisal, curatorial and archival bias, and institutional identity.

ANDY WARHOL AS HOARDER AND ARTIST

When Andy Warhol died in 1987, people were shocked to discover his five-story townhouse stuffed so full of objects, many still in cartons and shopping bags, that the doors would not fully open or close, and only two or three rooms were inhabitable. According to Cathleen McGuigan, "Jewelry was found in cookie tins; a Picasso was stuck in a closet. Another closet was stuffed to the top with stunning Navajo blankets."[21] Sotheby's organized a spectacular ten-day sale to auction off all of Warhol's belongings. Inventorying all the items took several weeks, and the presale viewing filled three floors

[20] For the use of this term, see Chocano, "Underneath Every Hoarder."

of the auction house. The objects, grouped into almost 3,000 lots, generated a six-volume auction catalogue. Warhol's possessions included paintings, American Federal furniture, and art deco jewelry, as well as almost 8,000 pieces of kitsch and collectibles, including cookie jars, plastic jewelry, Bakelite radios, lithographed roasted-peanut and coffee tins, and a Japanese suit of armor.[22] Other items included classical sculpture, photographs, vintage wristwatches, and novelty timepieces still "bearing original Bloomingdale's price tags."[23]

Warhol's patterns of acquisition corresponded very closely to those of hoarders as they are described in the scientific literature. His possessions overwhelmed his living space, spilling out of closets, stacked on the staircases, and piled on the floor, making his townhouse almost unlivable.[24] A photo of his dining room taken after his death shows paintings leaning in clusters against the walls, and the floor and dining table almost completely buried under papers and other objects.

Moreover, Warhol seems to have had no interest in displaying his collections. Like many hoarders, he was secretive about his hoard; many of his friends said that they never saw the inside of his home while he was alive.[25] Warhol's longtime partner Jed Johnson described his acquisitiveness as "inconspicuous consumption." Nor could Warhol bring himself to part with any of his belongings, even though he was always

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[21] Cathleen McGuigan, "The Selling of Andy Warhol," *Newsweek*, April 18, 1988.
[22] Rita Reif, "Warhol's World on View: Gems and Cookie Jars," *New York Times*, April 15, 1988.
[23] McGuigan, "Selling."
[24] Jonathan Flatley, "Like: Collecting and Collectivity," *October* 132 (2010), 71-98; 80.

promising to do so.[26] His friend Henry Geldzahler called him an "indefatigable accumulator," and Suzie Frankfurt, a longtime friend of Warhol's, likewise remarked that "as for trading or selling—never, never, never. He believed in holding onto everything, squirreling it all away."[27] According to Paul Alexander, "One day at Sotheby's, both Pivar [Stuart Pivar, a close friend of Warhol's] and Warhol wanted a $10,000 classical bust, so they bought it together. But Warhol took it home with him and never got around to paying Pivar his half of the money."[28] Indeed, Warhol was constantly buying things. As many of his friends noted, Warhol went shopping nearly every day. Frederick Hughes, Warhol's friend and business manager, claims that Warhol spent more than a million dollars a year on auctions alone.[29]

Moreover, as is typical of many hoarders, Warhol was obsessed with memory and forgetting.[30] Beginning in 1964 and continuing until his death, Warhol taped his conversations using a tape recorder he called his "wife," resulting in over 10,000 hours of audio recording; he also left behind 66,000 photos.[31] He wrote, "I have no memory...I try

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[25] Michael Lobel, "Warhol's Closet," in *Possession Obsession: Andy Warhol's Collecting*, ed. John Smith (Pittsburgh: Andy Warhol Museum, 2002), 66. Originally published in *Art Journal* (1996), 42-50.
[26] Flatley, "Like," 80.
[27] Flatley, "Like," 98.
[28] Paul Alexander, "What Happened to Andy's Treasures?" *New York Magazine*, January 27, 1992; 28.
[29] Flatley, "Like," 96.
[30] According to Grisham, for example, "One study investigating hoarding and memory found that people who hoard recalled less information on memory tasks, both nonverbal (Rey–Osterrith Complex Figure Test, RCFT) and verbal (California Verbal Learning Test), and used less effective organizational strategies on the RCFT compared to matched normal control subjects. Hoarding participants also reported significantly less confidence in their memory"(47).
[31] Flatley, "Like," 96-7.

to remember but I can't. That's why I got married—to my tape recorder. That's why I seek out people with minds like tape recorders to be with. My mind is like a tape recorder with one button—Erase."[32] He even tried to capture smells, or, more precisely, the memories evoked by them, by collecting perfume and wearing each scent only once so that smelling that particular perfume again would recall a specific memory.[33] As with other hoarders, the photos, audiotapes, memorabilia, and perfumes thus functioned as memory devices, to help protect Warhol against his fear of forgetting.

Warhol's tendencies toward hoarding have discomfited, and tested, museum curators and art historians who are more comfortable with seeing hoarder and artist as mutually exclusive identities. Several critics expressed indignance at the idea that Warhol could have been a hoarder, as though, if true, it would have detracted in some way from his art. John Smith, for example, declared,

> While it is true that on the surface Warhol's collecting might appear to have been indiscriminate hoarding, a closer look reveals very specific strategies. Far from a psychological aberration, Warhol's collection may be seen as another form of artistic practice, one which offers commentary on Warhol's own aesthetic and underscores his connection with history and the culture of his times.[34]

Art critics were thus forced to confront the correspondences among his possessions, his acquisitiveness, and his art, with varying degrees of acceptance. Most tended to avoid the term "hoard" altogether, opting instead for the more socially acceptable "collection." For

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[32] Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 199.
[33] Flatley, "Like," 82.

Melik Kaylan, "Andy Warhol's collection was as much a focus of his energies and eloquent of his preoccupations as his art."[35] Others, however, both acknowledged Warhol's hoarding and worked to incorporate it into productive scholarship. Michael Lobel, for example, wrote an influential article on the relationship between Andy Warhol's habits of acquisition and his homosexuality, arguing that while "the artist's collecting habits speak of an impulse to hoard...it is not enough merely to state this fact, for we have to attend as well to the particularities of such a practice."[36]

To be sure, it is not difficult to draw connections between Warhol's hoarding and his art. As McGuigan notes,

> Much of the stuff Warhol collected—from a 19th-century oculist's sign to an outsize Coke bottle used for display—reflects the interest in advertising and packaging by the artist who immortalized the Brillo box and celebrated mass culture with his images of Marilyn and Elvis."[37]

Warhol's career, like his hoarding, famously disrupted the boundaries between commercial enterprise and fine art. His first jobs were as a commercial illustrator, drawing advertisements for magazines. Even were we to pass in silence over the obvious messages about commerce in his Campbell's soup can paintings and the commercial implications of the name of his studio, the Factory, he also designed album covers for

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[34] John Smith, "Andy Warhol's Art of Collecting," in *Possession Obsession*, 16.
[35] Melik Kaylan, "The Warhol Collection: Why Selling It Is A Shame," *Connoisseur* 915 (April 1988), 118-128.
[36] Lobel, "Warhol's Closet," 73.
[37] McGuigan, "Selling."

The Velvet Underground and Nico and the Rolling Stones; appeared in advertisements; and consciously manipulated the commercial value of his artwork.[38]

Moreover, contrary to the beliefs of some art historians and museum curators, psychologists have found a great deal of correspondence between hoarding and creativity. When one of Frost's patients, Madeline, was in college, she began piling clothes, papers, books and memorabilia in the middle of her dorm room. She kept putting off organizing it, until finally the dome-shaped pile began to remind her of an ancient burial-mound, with an aesthetic mixture of textures and colors. Both she and her roommate came to see it as a piece of art—what she called a "stuff structure." According to Frost, "The shape and colors pleased her, and the things sticking out seemed to contain the memories of the events they represented. From that point on, taking the pile apart was unthinkable."[39] Hoarders also tend to suffer from "under-inclusiveness": they see each possession as totally unique, so it cannot be categorized with other possessions, and thus cannot be organized. The resulting clutter does not reflect a lack of organizing categories, but an overabundance of them: each object in a pile of clutter is its own category.[40]

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[38] Victor Bockris, in his biography *The Life and Death of Andy Warhol* (New York: Bantam, 1989), provides innumerable examples of Warhol's self-conscious attempts to make money from his art, of which the following is one such: "By the fall of 1974, [Warhol's] portrait business was well on its way to becoming a million-dollar-a-year operation. Anyone could have a portrait painted by Warhol for twenty-five thousand dollars, the price of a forty-by-forty-inch canvas…Andy usually painted more than one canvas of his clients if he thought there was a chance he could sell them more than one. The second canvas cost fifteen thousand, the third ten thousand, the fourth five thousand. Additional panels held a special incentive for art collectors—where else could you get a comparable Warhol for the price?"(284).

[39] Frost, *Stuff*, 223-4.

[40] Frost and Hartl, "Cognitive Behavioral Model," 345.

Yet this perspective of under-inclusiveness also suggests that hoarders approach the world from a more aesthetic point of view than do most people. Another one of Frost's patients, Irene, exhorted him to admire her extensive bottle cap collection: "Look at these bottle caps—aren't they beautiful? Look at the shape and the color." Frost speculates that people who hoard see and appreciate features of objects that others overlook, perhaps because of their propensity for visual and spatial qualities, and that their ability to see uniqueness and value where others do not may stem from particularly inquisitive and creative minds.[41]

Similarly, when Andy Warhol was asked to curate *Raid the Icebox I*, an exhibition at Rhode Island School of Design meant to showcase the treasures and masterpieces at RISD that were kept in storage because of the shortage of permanent display space, according to Deborah Bright,

> Warhol selected for display entire collections of objects in their impromptu storage containers and arrays: all the shoes in the large wooden cabinet, plus the cabinet; all the hatboxes and bandboxes piled on a table; all the paintings in gilt frames stacked against a wall; all the old piles of auction catalogues stacked on a desk; all the parasols strung up on wires or stuffed in the shoe cabinet; the entire row of Windsor chairs used for spare parts; the whole group of mixed statues on pedestals; a chest full of Indian blankets; two shelves of ancient Indian ceramic pots and a cluster of baskets.[42]

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[41] Frost, *Stuff*, 66; 101.
[42] Deborah Bright, "Shopping the Leftovers: Warhol's Collecting Strategies in *Raid the Icebox I*," *Art History* 24:2 (2001), 278-291; 284-5.

When the curator of the costume collection learned that Warhol wanted to display the entire shoe collection, she objected, "Well, you don't want it *all* because there's some duplication." Warhol "raised his eyebrows and blinked" in reply.[43] Where the curator saw a lack of differentation, Warhol saw an excess of singularity. To this end, and even more irritating to the museum staff, Warhol specifically requested that each item in the exhibition, regardless of its value, be individually cataloged.[44] This meant writing a separate catalog record and exhibition label for each of the almost two hundred pairs of shoes, fifty-seven umbrellas and parasols, and so on. Daniel Robbins, the museum's director, wrote, "There were exasperating moments when we felt that Andy Warhol was exhibiting 'storage' rather than works of art."[45]

Robbins called the cataloging an "extremely difficult and painstaking task," and the Chief Curator, Stephen Ostrow, had the texts from the catalogue cards in the Registrar's Office typed onto lists without further research, though this "bothered [him] terribly" at the time. According to Deborah Bright, in this way "the traditional power of the curatorial label to assert a coherent narrative of the logic of artistic development or to validate the object's singularity was thoroughly undermined."[46] Warhol's display and cataloging decisions unnerved the museum staff because of the ways in which it disrupted typical museological practices, although the museum eventually came to celebrate the merits of Warhol's show. Both Bright, a faculty member at RISD, and Liza

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[43] David Bourdon, "Andy's Dish," in *Raid the Icebox 1 with Andy Warhol: An Exhibition selected from the storage vaults of the Museum of Art*, *Rhode Island School of Design* (Providence: Rhode Island School of Design, 1969), 20.
[44] Bright, "Shopping," 289.
[45] Daniel Robbins, "Confessions of a Museum Director," in *Raid the Icebox I*, 15.

Corrin, in an article published several decades later in RISD's own journal, recuperate and authenticate Warhol's curatorial choices as a worthwhile artistic endeavor in line with his general aesthetic viewpoint.[47] RISD thus integrated Warhol's hoarding habits into the museum space, legitimizing hoarding practices while at the same time redefining what could constitute legitimate museum practices.

Similarly, the museum establishment has embraced Warhol's Time Capsules despite their problematic relationship to museological collecting. Warhol probably began the Time Capsules during his 1974 move from his studio at 33 Union Square West to a new space at 860 Broadway. He habitually kept a box beside his desk as a Time Capsule in progress, into which he would periodically sweep the detritus that had accumulated on his desk: correspondence, magazines, newspapers, gifts, photographs, business records, collectibles, and other ephemera. When a box was complete, an assistant taped it shut and dated it.[48] When Warhol died in 1987, he left behind 610 such boxes, which are still being cataloged at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh. Although the boxes may not have begun consciously as art, there is evidence that Warhol began to think of them as such. He considered both exhibiting and selling them as art pieces; in February 15, 1978, he wrote in his diary, "I really ought to auction off some of my time capsule boxes, that would be a good thing to do in an art gallery. But I would try to make every box a little interesting. I'd throw in one of my dresses, or an old shirt, a pair of underwear—

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[46] Bright, "Shopping," 285.
[47] Liza Graziose Corrin, "The Legacy of Daniel Robbins' *Raid the Icebox I*," in *Rhode Island School of Design Notes* (June 1996), 54-61. Quoted in Bright, "Shopping," 280.
[48] Smith, "Andy Warhol's Art of Collecting," 11.

something great in each one."[49] According to Matt Wrbican, he also had an idea "to make a very small drawing to be placed in each box and then selling each for an identical price, with the box's contents unseen by the buyer."[50] Despite, or perhaps because of the sly winks embedded in these comments toward art's dependence on commerce, one critic declared that "as witnesses of Warhol's everyday life they are both documents and memorabilia of the star cult, so they attain the rank of artworks in the context of Pop Art aesthetics."[51] Hoarded into boxes, the Time Capsules transmute Warhol's life into art.

The Time Capsules, moreover, exemplify Warhol's struggle with space and spaces. He was always trying to create space, but instead kept filling it up. He once said, "I want to live in a studio. In one room. That's what I've always wanted, [to] not have anything—to be able to get rid of all my junk."[52] Warhol, in fact, wrote at length about his desire for empty spaces:

> I really believe in empty spaces, but on the other hand, because I'm still making some art, I'm still making junk for people to put in their spaces that I believe should be empty…I go even further in not following my own philosophy, because I can't even empty my own spaces...When I look at things, I always see the space they occupy. I always want the space to reappear, to make a comeback, because it's lost space when there's something in it.[53]

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[49] Thomas Sokolowski, "Foreword," *Andy Warhol's Time Capsule 21* (Dumont, 2003), 8.
[50] Matt Wrbican, "A Guided Tour of Time Capsule 21," in *Andy Warhol's Time Capsule 21*, 23. Also see Wrbican, "Warhol's Hoard A Treasure Trove," *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 20, 2007.
[51] Sokolowski, "Foreword," 8.
[52] McGuigan, "Selling."
[53] Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 144.

Lobel also notes Warhol's desire for space, even as he could not resist filling up all the space he had, arguing that Warhol's insatiable acquisitiveness disrupted, indeed threatened to collapse, his domestic, interior space even as this habit initially promised to "reify the confining safety of private space."[54] In this way, the Time Capsules represent the hope of containing at least one aspect of the hoarder's infinite expansion.

Other critics also observed Warhol's difficult relationship to spaces. For Allen Kurzweil,

> Andy explored the nature of that paradox, the incongruity of the Empty and the Occupied, by emptying all those spaces that were filled (hence all those visits to tag sales) and filling all those spaces that were empty (hence the massive production of art). The Time Capsules, by simultaneously purging and producing, conjoined the space of the Empty and Occupied in a single...act.[55]

Given the ways in which Warhol's behavior corresponded closely with that of clinically diagnosed hoarding, I am not convinced that Warhol's visits to tag sales and his artistic production were necessarily part of a deliberate exploration "of the nature of that paradox, the Empty and the Occupied." However, I find quite compelling Kurzweil's assessment that "by boxing up and labeling what he bought, and by attaching to those labeled boxes an irresisitible narrative, Andy turned chronic acquisitiveness into something profoundly artful."[56] Certainly, it seems that this act of containment

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[54] Lobel, "Warhol's Closet," 73-4.
[55] Allen Kurzweil, "Booked for Possession: Andy Warhol as Collector," in *Possession Obsession*, 38.
[56] Kurzweil, "Booked," 38.

transforms hoarding into an activity that *others could accept* as art. Yet Warhol did not make this transformation easy. While in the RISD warehouse, he

> stopped to peruse some eighteenth and nineteenth century hat boxes, trimmed with printed paper, and piled like minimal sculptures on a large table. As demonstrated in his own Brillo box sculptures, he showed more interest in the containers than in what they contained. He decided to take them all.[57]

In displaying *all* the empty containers, Warhol placed containment in tension with proliferation; this tension, coupled with his decision to give space over to objects that straddle the boundary between emptiness and purpose, and the museum's at first reluctant and later enthusiastic acceptance of this decision, exemplify the effort required by both hoarder and audience to control the hoard and to turn it into art.

Of course, mostly unspoken throughout these critical analyses of Warhol's hoarding practices is the way in which his now-entrenched reputation as an artist with undeniably significant influence affects at least some critics' views of his work, who seek meaning in his acquisitiveness because he was an artist, rather than the other way around. Nevertheless, Warhol's practices of excessive acquisition and accumulation, which both influenced and were inflected by his artwork, forced museum staff and art historians in his own time and ours to rethink traditional museological dichotomies: between fine art and kitsch, certainly, but also between collection and hoard, hoarder and artist, storage and display, emptiness and occupation, and, perhaps most significantly for this paper, clutter and containment.

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[57] Bourdon, "Raid the Icebox," 18.

CLEAN HOUSE: SANITIZING THE MARKETPLACE

As Katherine Feo Kelly writes, "In the last decade, television shows documenting the overabundance of material culture in American homes have become increasingly popular with U.S. audiences."[58] Although the home improvement show is not a new television genre—media scholars generally agree that it began in America with Bob Vila's *This Old House*—their recent resurgence can be traced to the overwhelming popularity of *Trading Spaces*, imported from Britain in 2000 on TLC. By 2005, TLC had also added *Moving Up*, *Town Haul*, *Clean Sweep*, *In A Fix*, and *While You Were Out*.[59] ABC's *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, which first aired in December 2003, became another huge success, and in 2005 there were at least 20 home makeover shows on HGTV, including *Design on a Dime*, *Designed to Sell*, *Divine Design*, *Design Remix*, *Date With Design*, and *reDesign*.[60]

Within the home makeover genre, several shows have begun to focus on the management of clutter and overabundance of material possessions. This section focuses on one such show: *Clean House*, a lighthearted (Netflix categorizes it as "campy") show hosted from 2003 to 2010 by comedian Niecy Nash, and then, beginning in 2011, by actress Tempestt Bledsoe. Now in its tenth season, each episode of *Clean House* begins

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[58] Katherine Feo Kelly, "The Hoarding Spectacle and Televised Overconsumption," in *Organize!: Organization as Design in the American Home, 1975-2010*, 1 (Ph.D. diss, The University of Texas at Austin, 2011). I am very grateful to Katherine Feo Kelly for sharing her dissertation chapter with me.

[59] June Deery, "Interior Design: Commodifying Self and Place in *Extreme Makeover*, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, and *The Swan*," in *The Great American Makeover: Television, History, and Nation*, ed. Dana Heller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 163.

with a family documenting the extent of their clutter and pleading for *Clean House* to help them control it. As the show's host, accompanied by several other organizing and home decorating "experts," walks through the house assessing the clutter, they chide the owners, express mock horror at the mess, and joke about the odd objects they encounter. Then, with the owners' help, they select items from the home to sell at a yard sale, the proceeds from which go towards furnishing the now-empty rooms in a supposedly more tasteful way.

Many media critics have been interested in the lessons that home makeover shows teach their audiences about how purchases affect, and even determine, identity and well-being.[61] This nexus of commerce and collecting, or rather hoarding, is expressed in a particularly interesting and forceful way in the third episode of the tenth season, which focuses on the Waldorf family. Jessica Waldorf is a self-described "pop-culture collector." "Kitsch," she says, "defines me." Her "collecting," however, has overwhelmed her family's Alameda, California home; the objects are not only stacked on shelves but also piled on the floor and on every surface of the house. The clutter is also affecting her family relationships. Bledsoe's introductory voiceover sums it up: "One woman's obsession with collecting is ruining her marriage!" Despite these indications that she is in fact a hoarder, Jessica repeatedly identifies herself as a collector. For example, in explaining why her husband Mel should not complain about their cluttered home, she says defensively, "He knew I was a collector when he met me." The show,

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[60] Anita Gates, "These Old Houses: A TV Genre Is Built," *New York Times*, February 11, 2005.
[61] Deery, "Interior Design," 161.

however, consistently characterizes her as a businessperson—a seller, not collector, of kitsch—focusing unwaveringly on Jessica's supposed business selling her items on eBay despite very little evidence that any such selling is actually taking place, and repeatedly referring to her collections as her "inventory." Her possessions are also constantly referenced in terms of their monetary value. Joel Steingold, one of the experts whom the episode calls the "Yard Sale King," tells her, "You have great taste…When I see that tiki collection, dollar signs are all over my face." The dissonance emerges at several points in the episode. When Bledsoe asks her, "Is the majority of the stuff supposed to be sold?" Jessica is silent as her husband Mel answers, "Better be!" Later, when Bledsoe asks Jessica if she wants to keep the business, she answers, "I do want a business," implying that she does not currently have any business at all. And in a particularly memorable scene, Bledsoe bellows comically at her to convince her to part with her belongings: "Whatcha gonna SELL! SELL, SELL, SELL!" Indeed, Jessica's understanding of "work" constitutes not the collections' dispersal but rather their accumulation. After being goaded into giving up half of her belongings, she says forlornly into the camera, "I love the collection. It's been something I've been working on for a long time."

At the yard sale, the show's hosts set up a separate tent for Jessica to sell her "inventory." The yard sale segment is a particularly interesting ritual of each *Clean House* episode, because it is through these sales that the show encourages the consumption that it elsewhere condemns. Guests on the show, including Jessica Waldorf, are consistently reprimanded for being unable to resist the allure of yard, garage, and estate sales, but the *Clean House*-sponsored yard sale deliberately valorizes the

marketplace, turning it, even more than the items for sale in it, into an object of desire. As the hosts appear in self-consciously silly themed costumes—for the Waldorfs' kitsch-themed sale, Bledsoe dons a vampy red gown and white feather boa and calls herself "Temptress Bledsoe"; Matt Iseman, the handyman, is dressed as a Hawaiian dancer, complete with grass skirt; and Joel Steingold has put on a wig and is now Joel "The Fonz" Steingold—the shoppers cheer and wave their arms as they descend on the yard sale. The hosts play with children and joke with the customers, who smile and cheer as they score bargains. Even in a rare moment when a sale is shown threatening to go awry, and Jessica is pressured against her wishes to sell a table for far less than she wanted to, the woman who buys the table comforts her by assuring her, "It will be used."[62] In *Clean House*, commerce is portrayed as a positive, energizing force that facilitates not primarily the cycle of production and consumption, nor the exchange of goods for money, but rather the nurture of interpersonal relationships. Indeed, one might say that what is being sanitized and made aesthetically appealing on *Clean House* is the tainted image of commerce itself. Not only is the marketplace portrayed as bustling, cheerful, orderly, and pleasant, but the experts emphasize that the money made from it will go towards helping "make the place fantastic for [the] whole family." As soon as money is made, it must be spent; the show forbids the hoarding of money no less than of objects. Its rhetoric, however, focuses not on the purchase of new goods, but rather on how the money will

[62] For more on the yard sale as a facilitator of interpersonal relationships, see Gretchen Hermann, "Gift or Commodity: What Changes Hands in the U.S. Garage Sale?" *American Ethnologist* 24:4 (1997), 910-930, who argues that "in the garage sale, the metaphor of the market-that is, all the apparent trappings of buying and selling-

promote familial harmony. Although Jessica had been given a "store" in the middle of the yard sale to sell her own inventory, and been told she could keep the proceeds, once the yard sale concludes, Matt Iseman tells her, "It's up to you. The eight hundred dollars [you earned] will go towards making the whole place fantastic for your whole family. Or, if you hold onto the money, things will be...[he pauses dramatically and shrugs]...cut out." When Jessica reluctantly hands over her earnings, Bledsoe exclaims, "How wonderful for her to give that money for her family!"

With the money from the sale, the experts transform the Waldorfs' house into a place where Jessica can focus on her eBay business. In the garage, where all her inventory is now displayed on open shelves, Bledsoe says, "Now you can see [the inventory], and now you can…" Jessica, having by now apparently learned her lesson, chimes in, "SELL it!" The display of objects here facilitates the collection's disintegration. The office is also cleaned out and transformed to maximize Jessica's and Mel's productivity. Earlier, Bledsoe had offered Jessica a surprise gift if she would be willing to give up half of her collections for the yard sale; the surprise turns out to be a miniature photo studio for her to use to improve her eBay business. The show thus works to transform Jessica's understanding of work from that of accumulation to that of dispersal by sanitizing the dirty business of commerce.

The world of commerce leaves its imprint on the show in other ways as well. Note, for example, this exchange between Jessica and Matt Iseman:

Matt Iseman, *noticing Jessica carrying a mannequin wearing a skimpy black*

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simultaneously cloaks and facilitates a web of transactions that are often as much as or

undergarment: Hey! Taking that out to the yard sale?

Jessica: No!

Matt: Where are you putting it?

Jessica: *She* [Jessica's emphasis] belongs inside…she's part of my whole collection business!

Matt: She is?

Jessica: She is!

Matt, *taking the mannequin from her*: This wigless, legless, armless mannequin?

Jessica: I mean, she is someone I use to model some of my vintage clothing…

Matt: Can we come up with a name? I feel crazy just—

Jessica: I don't name her! She's not my friend. She—

Matt: How about we call her Clarice.

Jessica: Clarice is fine.

In the final home redesign, Clarice ends up in Jessica's office, wearing a pretty green scarf. Michelle Henning has observed of commodity fetishism that "an excessive anthropomorphism, or an over-identification with objects, can actually undermine the orientation of the market toward accelerated exchange and consumption." She describes an advertisement by Spike Jonze in which viewers are encouraged to empathize with a discarded lamp lying in a dark and rainy street while its owner installs a replacement:

> Viewers are then castigated: "Many of you feel bad for this lamp. That is because you're crazy. It has no feelings! And the new one is much better." The

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more socially engaged as economically rationalized"(912).

> advertisement shows the ease with which people can be encouraged to feel for inanimate objects, invites viewers to laugh at themselves and their foolishness, and, using the commonsense notion that anthropomorphic thinking is "crazy" thinking, encourages accelerated obsolescence and increased consumption. Implicitly, the ad acknowledges that what stands in the way of increased turnover of goods is our sentimental attachment to things.[63]

Although, unlike the Spike Jonze ad, *Clean House* encourages Jessica's anthropomorphization of the mannequin, the show nevertheless neutralizes the danger that her affection for it poses for economic exchange by incorporating it into the workplace. Convinced by Jessica's argument that the mannequin is not a sentimental attachment, but rather will contribute to her eBay business, the show allows the mannequin to stay and even gives it a name and a clothing makeover of its own.

The show tests Macdonald's theory that all collecting is museological: Jessica "collects," as she would say, but the show presents it as—indeed, labors to transform it into—a business whereby things go on display only so that they can be sold and scattered. Even more, the show seems intent on deliberately distancing the Waldorfs from the museum mindset: the only reference to a museum during the episode is a derogatory one, when Joel Steingold describes the Waldorfs' home mockingly as "a museum and a time machine all at once," conjuring an image of the museum as a dead space stuffed with relics of the past. In contrast, the show lauds the bustling present and rosy future represented by the conduct of business. The episode focuses on how much pleasure the

dispersal of things brings, subscribing not to the theory of museum studies scholars that it is what you collect that defines you, but rather to that of dirt theorists, who argue that you are defined by what you discard.[64]

Nevertheless, the relationship between museums and commerce is a long and entangled one. According to Macdonald, museums and department stores often borrowed design features from one another. For example, at the turn of the century, museums began to use period rooms; in the 1920s and 1930s, department stores used them as well. Department store window displays and museum dioramas both used wax mannequins, and stores and museums shared new lighting technologies and techniques to showcase the objects on display.[65] Both, moreover, put objects on display through the tantalizing technology of the vitrine or glass case, in which things could be seen and admired but not touched, thus whetting, but not immediately satisfying, the possessive appetite.[66] According to Henning, these similarities are not unintentional. The newly wealthy impresarios who ran department stores, such as John Wanamaker and Albert Blum, sat on

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[63] Michelle Henning, *Museums, Media and Cultural Theory* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2006), 9.

[64] See, for example, Gay Hawkins, *The Ethics of Waste: How We Relate to Rubbish* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), who writes, "What we want to get rid of [not only] tells us who we are [but] also makes us who we are"(2). Quoted in Amy West, "Reality Television and the Power of Dirt," *Screen* 52:1 (2001), 63-77; 73. Also see *Dirt: New Geographies of Cleanliness and Contamination*, eds. Ben Campkin and Rosie Cox (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007); and *Filth: Dirt, Disgust and Modern Life*, eds. William Cohen and Ryan Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005). The classic works on dirt and abjection are Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2002) and Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

[65] Henning, *Museums*, 31.

[66] Macdonald, "Collecting Practices," 86.

the directorial boards of major American museums in the mid- and late-nineteenth century. They also founded museums; Marshall Field, for example, founded the Field Museum in Chicago with a million dollar donation. The millionaire merchants supported the arts through their stores and, from the turn of the twentieth century, began to finance art exhibitions.[67] What the museum could do, however, was to teach people how to consume with restraint and good taste. As Henning explains, in the museum,

> minimal amounts of objects, individual lighting, and large empty areas became more suggestive of wealth than accumulation and clutter, now associated with Victorian poor taste and even with poverty. The display of the permanent collection of a modern art museum connects aesthetics with commerce, both by recalling expensive modern homes or classy boutiques and by addressing visitors as discerning customers…The American middle classes had been schooled in a new kind of aesthetic appreciation, tightly wedded to their skills as consumers, with discretion, good taste, and an eye for value.[68]

The "mid-century modern minimalist" style that Jessica Waldorf requests from the show's experts provides precisely this lesson in restraint. The redecorated house is spare and clean. The only visible remnant of her once endlessly proliferating collection is a carefully edited collection of tiki mugs that the hosts have placed in the living room in a small display cabinet, behind glass doors, so discreet that it is one of the last things Jessica notices about her new space.

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[67] Henning, *Museums*, 31.
[68] Henning, *Museums*, 35.

Margot Hornblower called the Sotheby's auction of Warhol's belongings "the garage sale of the century."[69] The comparison gives the high-end auction a soupçon of tawdriness—a connotation of the garage sale that *Clean House* works to undo. By appropriating the museum's educational role even as it dismisses the museum's relevance, *Clean House* becomes the museum's competitor for visitors eager to be shaped into tasteful, discerning consumers. At the end of the episode, Steingold says, "I think Jessica gets it now. More is not always better." He speaks to the camera, looking out at the show's audience: it is important not only that Jessica has learned her lesson about the proper role of display in the facilitation of economic exchange, but that the show's viewers—and consumers—have learned it, too.

THE DIRT ON *HOARDERS*

Several years after *Clean House* began, another kind of show focusing on cleaning out clutter emerged: *Hoarders*, on A&E, which began airing in 2009, followed by *Hoarding: Buried Alive*, which began airing on TLC in 2010. According to Chocano, the creators of *Hoarders* had originally imagined that it would be a comedic home-makeover show like *Clean House*. It evolved, however, into what she describes as

> the reality horror show it is today when the producers realized that their guests were, in fact, mentally ill. The show was accordingly reoriented to focus on their psychological rescue, emphasizing the looming piles of junk as the physical manifestation of psychic clutter.[70]

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[69] Hornblower, "Garage Sale of the Century," *Time Magazine*, May 9, 1998.
[70] Chocano, "Underneath Every Hoarder."

Hoarders thus takes a very different approach to the same clutter seen in *Clean House*. Katherine Feo Kelly has observed *Clean House*'s mostly comedic and superficial feints towards the rhetoric and trappings of illness and therapy, staging, for example, a couch session between the host (an actor, not a psychologist) and the homeowners to "diagnose" their problem, and inventing comic faux-medical terminology to characterize chronic clutter. At the end of one *Clean House* cleanup, Iseman announces, "I'm pleased to say, the clutter-ectomy was a complete success!"[71] Moreover, each episode of *Clean House* concludes with the host pointedly telling the homeowners, "Now do you know what comes next? We leave you to enjoy your clutter-free home!" As far as *Clean House* is concerned, at the end of each episode the show's work is complete: the physical transformation of the home mirrors the psychological transformation of its owners. At the end of the Waldorfs' episode, Jessica declares with a firm nod, "I will *not* clutter this back up again." Each episode is self-contained, the problems tidily—one might even say cleanly—resolved.

In contrast, *Hoarders* emphasizes the messiness and untidiness of attempts to contain the illness itself, stressing the need for ongoing treatment and warning of relapses and slow, difficult progress. On each episode of *Hoarders*, the show both exposes and tries to assist people who have been so unable to manage their "clutter" that they are now on the brink of such traumatic events as eviction, foreclosure, jail time, loss of child custody, or divorce. The hoarder works with a psychologist or psychiatrist, as well as with a professional organizer who specializes in "chronic disorganization," to try to

[71] Kelly, *Organize!*, 7.

manage his or her disorder, in both the physical and psychological senses of the word. Where *Clean House* touches only lightly on their guests' emotional attachments to their things—owners often resist letting go of a particular item, citing a sentimental attachment, but are always convinced to discard the item in exchange for a "gift" from the host—the participants on *Hoarders* spend a large portion of the show trying, as part of their therapy, to explain why their relationship to their belongings prevents them from being able to throw anything away. One hoarder is unable to part with old baby clothes because they had been worn by her baby who had died in childbirth. Another cannot get rid of any of his belongings because they are "a reminder of the joy of the life that I've led." *Hoarders* makes clear that attachments to things are only painfully severed; instead, such attachments linger on long past the usefulness of the item, seeping inextricably into many other aspects of the hoarder's life.

One such hoarder is Dale, a 52-year-old man who lives in Boston, Massachusetts, and who appears on the third episode of the second season. An artist and dollmaker, he cannot resist salvaging "found objects" for the beauty he sees in them. These objects, however, have now so choked up his government-subsidized apartment that it has been deemed a health and fire hazard. A title card announces that "Dale's 'collecting' has prompted building management to begin eviction proceedings against him." This attempt to excise the problem that Dale presents begins the theme of the futile struggle for containment that will run throughout the episode.

According to the show, Dale finds most of his possessions through Dumpster diving, an activity that confuses the boundaries not only between garbage and treasure

but also between interior and exterior spaces. We see him leaning his entire body into his "favorite trash Dumpster," laughing excitedly as he fishes out a silver picture frame. He shows Dr. Elizabeth Moore, a clinical psychologist assigned by the show to assist him, how to navigate a narrow path through the towering piles of belongings in his apartment, which he calls his "alleyway," as though his possessions have transformed the inside of his apartment into an outside space.

Lobel asked of Warhol's cluttered home, "In its aggressive assault on the domestic interior, Warhol's collecting seems to pose a question: if one accumulated enough, could the collection overflow, and ultimately collapse, the boundary between interior and exterior?"[72] Dale's "collecting" does exactly that, and in other ways beyond bringing outside trash into his home. Dale tells us,

> Last twenty-five years I never had roaches. Now all of a sudden I have all these roaches. So I'm like, wow! Where did all these roaches come from? So I'm almost sure it's something that I brought in, I'm almost sure that they filtered up to the other tenancy, to the neighbors. It was really out of control.

Veronica, a Homeless Prevention Advocate assigned to Dale's case, confirms Dale's suspicion: "Right now, there's certain properties that are experiencing problems with their bugs, so if he brings furniture in, art pieces or artwork from a sale, and it's infested, then he brings that to the property, and then it could spread the infestation." Dale adds that even his reputation has spread to the other tenants: "As time went on, word got

[72] Lobel, "Warhol's Closet," 73-4.

around: 'Wow, you gotta see Dale's apartment.' Because I think they would see me Dumpster diving." On this show, everything spreads: cockroaches, clutter, and rumors.

Veronica describes the judgments people—presumably including the show's audience—would pass on Dale on seeing his place: "'Dirty, unkempt, overcrowded, how does one exist in such conditions?'" It is a question that viewers could and do ask of almost every episode.[73] Unlike *Clean House*, *Hoarders* focuses explicitly on dirt and garbage, with lingering camera shots in almost every episode of rotten food, flies, bedbugs, dead cats, towering piles of dirty adult diapers and used toilet paper, long-clogged toilets, and blackened bathtubs.[74] Dirt has a special significance when it appears

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[73] For a rich cache of examples of viewer reactions, see the thread devoted to *Hoarders* on the online television review website, televisionwithoutpity.com, "*Hoarders* on A&E: Now With Flying Possums." Available at http://forums.televisionwithoutpity.com/index.php?showtopic=3187670&pid=14076966&st=11625&#entry14076966. As of June 25, 2011, the thread runs to 776 pages and 11,626 posts.

[74] It should be noted that while *Clean House* refrains from showing this kind of filth, it, too, is intensely interested in trash, especially trash talk and "dirty" language. Jessica's collections, for example, are repeatedly labeled as "crap" and "shit," fit only for the dump truck. As Jessica says, "Mel does not help me clean or organize, except to say, 'Let me throw crap out, let me get the dump truck.'" When Joel Steingold asks for a percentage breakdown of how much of each kind of item Jessica has, Mel interjects, "100 percent a pile of shit, if I can say that," to which Jessica retorts, "It's not shit, it's valuable!" When the couple sit down with Bledsoe to discuss why they clutter, Jessica says angrily to Mel, "You've said… 'Don't bring any more shit home'...It feels disrespectful, I mean, yeah, I have a lot of stuff, but it's saying, 'What you do is not important…everything you have is shit.'" Indeed, the language of dirt, garbage, and excrement runs throughout the show. When Jessica says she goes to estate sales only once a week, Mel coughs and waves his hand in front of his face, as though Jessica's false claim has a foul smell. But the trash-talk and dirty language, while first a source and indication of discord between Mel and Jessica, and also a hint at bad parenting since their 8-year-old daughter, Sasha, uses "dirty" words as liberally as her parents do, is transformed by the end of the show into a way to express happiness and accord. The use of dirty words becomes a recurring gimmick in the episode; a perfectly "clean" word is treated with a wink as a dirty one when Steingold, explaining his idea for a kitsch-themed yard sale, tells Bledsoe, "I told Matt [my idea]; he didn't like it. I said, 'Kitsch, please.'" Pretending that Steingold has

on television; according to Amy West, the denigration of television as a medium has long deployed metaphors of dirt, waste and defilement, and within a myriad of especially dirty genres, it is reality television that realizes the representation of dirt most fully and literally.[75] In particular, "The rise of the reality television domestic makeover show in the 2000s has foregrounded the interrogation and categorization of dirty matter as an ongoing contemporary social practice." Following Mary Douglas's maxim that "dirt is essentially disorder," dirt is the preeminent subject of prime-time television. Within this framework, West argues, offenses against domestic order function as dirt:

> Thus television shows about the maintenance and management of the private home…enact "pollution behaviour" in a variety of forms, as they insist upon the demarcation of spatial, social and environmental boundaries according to received cultural conventions. Indeed…Douglas's doctrine on the relativity of dirt in western cultures sounds like a manifesto for reality programming about domestic life: Shoes are not dirty in themselves, but it is dirty to place them on the dining-table; food is not dirty in itself, but it is dirty to leave cooking utensils in the

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uttered a word rhyming with "kitsch," Bledsoe responds, "Joel, this is *Clean House*. Let's keep it clean." Later, when Mel sees the newly redecorated office, he shouts, "Holy fuck! This is incredible!" Sasha cries, "It's fuckin' awesome!" And Jessica echoes them both: "It's fucking awesome!" The episode concludes with all three Waldorfs shouting and laughing in unison, "Thank you, *Clean House*! It's fucking awesome!" Foul language is transformed from a way to express disgust into a method for demonstrating family concord and unity. As dirty language pervades the show, then, it loses its potency, becoming neutralized, contained, and sanitized. The process exemplifies Mary Douglas's argument that things are not intrinsically dirty; it is only context that determines whether they are considered to be so. Despite the show's espousal (and refusal to question the underlying cultural assumptions) of middle-class conventions of cleanliness, tidiness, productivity, and respectability when it comes to the home, then, *Clean House* is surprisingly subversive in demonstrating at least one cultural construction of "dirt."

> bedroom, or food bespattered on clothing; similarly, bathroom equipment in the drawing room; clothing lying on chairs; out-door things in-doors; upstairs things downstairs.[76]

As in the other case studies in this paper, Dale's existence defies a sense of order established by socially acceptable boundaries; unlike the other case studies, however, as we shall see, *Hoarders* works to prolong rather than resolve this loss of order and containment.

Dale's self-described "out of control" activities are deliberately contrasted to the experts' attempts to keep things contained, controlled, and organized when a cleaning crew arrives to help him begin the cleaning process so that he may avoid eviction. Where the crew constantly talks about "sorting" and "organizing" things, and are shown bustling through rooms with bags and bins, Dale resists their organizational efforts just as vigorously. As Christina, the professional organizer, instructs her workers to group a particular book with other books, Dale stops her, saying, "Within this book…is money." He pulls out a hundred-dollar bill. The hoarder's tendency towards under-inclusiveness manifests itself here: for Dale, the book cannot be categorized with other books because it is not simply a book; it is also a piggy bank. He is shown arguing heatedly and repeatedly with Christina about how disruptive and upsetting he finds this process of cleaning and organization, telling her with finality, "I'm broken." He presents himself as scattered and chaotic as his belongings. Later, he becomes upset at seeing what he calls

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[75] West, "Reality Television," 64.
[76] West, "Reality Television," 70.

"an old, old, old, old ironing board" in the crew's dump truck. He demands it back, undoing the work of the cleaning crew, and sets off with it back towards his apartment.

Although Dale is later shown marveling at his newly cleaned and organized apartment, and swearing that "if I don't continue this process, I'm giving all of you permission to kick my ass," the episode ends on a cautious, even slightly despairing note as Moore tells the camera, "What we did over the past few days is a short-term solution. Dale needs treatment going forward, or I imagine he's going to slip back to where he was." His propensity for hoarding, driven by what Moore repeatedly calls a mental illness during the episode (trying to mediate an argument between Dale and Christina, for example, she tells Christina, "This is a mental illness...it requires long-term treatment, and so we're just getting started here"), resists the narrative of neat containment and resolution offered by *Clean House*.

Not only will Dale's hoarding continue to be a threat to his own well-being, but *Hoarders* also encourages the possibility that it presents a danger of being passed on to its viewers. Although, as we have seen, hoarding is a pathology, and many hoarders also suffer from OCD, ADHD, anxiety, and depression, the show is popular in large part because it resonates with its mainstream audience. According to Robert Sharenow, then A&E's senior vice president of programming, "There's just a core relatability that people feel for this subject…People look at this show and see themselves to a degree, or see people they know."[77] The show's viewers report ruthlessly purging their own belongings

[77] "Compulsive Hoarders Suddenly In the Spotlight." December 17, 2009. Available at http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/34112617/ns/today-entertainment/t/compulsive-hoarders-suddenly-spotlight.

after watching, as though by disinfecting their own environments they may be able to ward off their own incipient hoarding.[78] One commenter named "tortietabbie" writes in an online discussion about an episode of *Hoarders*, "I've definitely gotten rid of a lot of crap in my house as a result of this show (I should say, as a result of my fear of being ON this show)."[79] The show encourages and even thrives on audiences' fears that hoarding is infectious, and that it can rub off onto those who observe it. In the 1990s, Joli Jensen had observed the contagious nature of television as itself a "trashy" media genre: "The audience who watches such 'trash' becomes trashy too, indulged in its naturally low tastes or seduced into accepting junk as meaningful."[80] Watching a television show, already marked as a "trashy" medium in modern discourse, that is literally about trash seems to heighten viewers' fears that they can become contaminated by what they see on it.

This seemingly uncontrollable leakiness is especially anathema to museums, for whom HVAC, environmental control, and keeping out dirt and pests are fundamental preoccupations. The advice of Timothy Ambrose and Crispin Paine to museum staff is representative of countless museum preservation and conservation manuals: "The problems of dirt and dust must ...be minimized... Dirt on museum objects not only looks unsightly, but also requires to be cleaned off to avoid the object suffering deterioration."

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[78] See, for example, Tess Lynch, "Inside the Strange World of 'Hoarders,'" Salon.com. September 6, 2010. Available at http://www.salon.com/entertainment/tv/feature/2010/09/06/interview_hoarders. Also see Jones, "Why We Hoard."

[79] The post was a response to an article on Jezebel.com, "Grown Woman Hoards Hundreds of Thousands of Dolls." June 21, 2011. Available at http://jezebel.com/5814091/grown-woman-hoards-hundreds-of-thousands-of-dolls.

Their recommended precautions include using dust-resistant display cases; keeping objects wrapped in acid-free tissue paper in closed storage units or in boxes with lids; using dust covers for large objects; and keeping doors and windows shut and sealed.[81] Foekje Boersma advises museum staff, "Whatever lives outside a museum building should remain there," and encourages vigilance about infestation. When one is detected, affected objects should be isolated, ideally "in a dedicated quarantine room."[82] The rhetoric of infestation and quarantine reveals museum staff's fear of contamination and its reliance on the various forms of containment—acid-free boxes, sealed doors and windows, quarantine rooms—to guard against such leaks and breaches. Where Warhol's hoarding became acceptable to the museum community because of his fixation on containment, and Jessica's hoarding is brought in line with museum practices via an education in tasteful consumerism and purveyorship, Dale's hoarding is not only deeply and unsettingly unmuseological, but actually anti-museological, because it unravels these boundaries, or, perhaps more accurately, reveals how tenuous they really are. The struggle to contain Dale's hoarding, and the show's depiction of its pervasive power even for audiences who are not clinically diagnosed hoarders, casts doubt on the effectiveness of efforts to clean, sterilize, and quarantine, no matter how heroic or vigorous they are. What the show valorizes, in short, is the possible—even probable—futility of approaching life in a museological way.

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[80] Joli Jensen, *Redeeming Modernity: Contradictions in Media Criticism* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1990), 182. Quoted in West, "Reality Television," 63.
[81] Timothy Ambrose and Crispin Paine, *Museum Basics* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 176.

CONCLUSION

The term "hoard" holds an important ambiguity that is particularly troublesome for those who work in or think about collecting institutions. Susan Pearce, for example, declares she will not use the term "hoarding" because

> in everyday use it means the gathering of material like...old papers or tins of food, sometimes carried to miserly excess...However, to archaeologists it means the deliberate gathering of selected materials for clearly social purposes, even if we do not know for certain what these purposes were... The term is therefore liable to confusion and...will be avoided in this book.[83]

Pearce's disinclination to engage with the ambiguity of what hoarding is reveals the blind spot of the museum studies scholar working to contain the idea—even the ideal—of collecting, to protect it from being contaminated by deeply imbricated activities which are seen as less desirable or worthy. Yet if this particular double meaning of the word "hoard" threatens to destabilize the collecting ideal, its association with archaeological practices also lends it respectability and legitimacy. In an archaeological context, a hoard "is a distinctive class of deposit whose contents form a closed association. Hoarding...is a particular kind of human activity, and for those who are more interested in investigating past behavior it is a process that demands attention in its own right."[84] Thus, according to Paige Powell, the advertising director of *Interview*, the magazine founded by Andy

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[82] Foekje Boersma, *Unravelling Textiles: A Handbook for the Preservation of Textile Collections* (London: Archetype Publications, 2007), 70-1.
[83] Susan Pearce, *Museums, Objects, and Collections: A Cultural Study* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 49-50.

Warhol, "Andy was like a real archaeologist...He really had a sense of capturing a moment in time."[85] Richard Hellinger declares of the Warhol Museum archives that

> researchers will not find the linear archival formats of more traditional collections. The apparent chaos within each category will be preserved because it accurately reflects the atmosphere of feverish activity that characterized the daily life of the artist and his studio...Like a contemporary-culture archaeological dig, the layers of disorder will reveal valuable insights into Warhol and his time.[86]

The metaphor of the archaeological dig, in fact, pervades each case of hoarding I have examined above. On *Clean House*, Jessica Waldorf describes the excitement of an estate sale find: "It's like looking for buried treasure," she says as she makes digging motions with her hands. On *Hoarders*, Dale, clutching a picture frame he has discovered in a dumpster, says excitedly, "The adrenaline starts rushing and almost makes me want to go deeper and deeper and dig for more." And if the practice of archaeology lends complexity and even dignity to the term "hoard," it does so in equal measure for the term "dirt." In the museum, the object on display is separated from the dirt in which it was found—but dirt is context, full of meaningful information.[87] It is, after all, one of the basic tenets of

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[84] Richard Bradley, "Hoards and Hoarding," in *The Oxford Companion to Archaeology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 306.
[85] McGuigan, "Selling."
[86] Richard Hellinger, "The Archives of the Andy Warhol Museum," in *The Andy Warhol Museum* (Pittsburgh: The Andy Warhol Museum, 1994), 197.
[87] Several recently published books about looted museum objects have brought public attention to an extreme version of the consequences of contextual loss. See especially Peter Watson and Cecilia Todeschini, *The Medici Conspiracy: The Illicit Journey of Looted Antiquities—From Italy's Tomb Raiders to the World's Greatest Museums* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2007); and Sharon Waxman, *Loot: The Battle Over the Stolen Treasures of the Ancient World* (New York: Times Books, 2008).

field archaeology to keep meticulous notes on differences in the soil's color, texture, consistency and coarse components; even slight gradations have valuable significations.[88] Indeed, to archaeologists, garbage can literally *be* context. The Garbage Project, established at the University of Arizona in 1973, applies archaeological principles and practices to the excavation and study of landfills. Its founder and director, William Rathje, celebrates the unique information that rubbish holds:

> [Garbage] is not an assertion but a physical fact—and thus may sometimes serve as a useful corrective. Human beings have over the centuries left many accounts describing their lives and civilizations.... Historians are understandably drawn to written evidence of this kind, but garbage has often served as a kind of tattle-tale, setting the record straight.[89]

Like Edgar Rubin's famous figure-ground vase, the optical illusion of a black-and-white image that can be perceived with equal validity as either a vase or two faces, separating trash from treasure can sometimes be similarly understood as a matter of focus and even bias.

Even the effort to distinguish trash *receptacles* from those that hold treasure can seem like looking at the shifting images of Rubin's vase. Despite the (perhaps unsurprising) position of museum studies scholarship that all collecting ideologies lead back to the museum, museums in fact constitute only one of several kinds of collecting institutions. Indeed, I suggest that while collecting is fundamentally museological insofar

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[88] Peter Drewett, *Field Archaeology: An Introduction* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2011), 102.

as one's focus is the museum, in fact collecting behaviors implicate and are implicated in memorial institutions generally. For example, archives, too, struggle constantly to defend themselves against both the transformation of their holdings into hoards and the perception that they are repositories for hoards. As John Carlin, then Archivist of the United States, insists, "The National Archives is not a dusty hoard of ancient history. It is a public trust on which democracy depends."[90] Indeed, archivists' protests against this perception of their work as a kind of hoarding can, like that of museum staff and museum studies scholars, be interpreted as a rhetorical self-definition. Richard Cox, for example, condemns collectors and popular collecting practices, finding in them no common ground with archives' more elevated pursuits:

> How [can] archivists...conduct appraisal by assigning value to records in a society so willing to assign bizarre and cryptic values to ordinary records and objects...; archivists can seek to be deliberate, but can they prevail against the usually less-than-rational collecting psyche? To cacophony we can add compulsion. Cigars become important documents! What can we do to operate rationally in such a world?[91]

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[89] William Rathje and Cullen Murphy, *Rubbish! The Archaeology of Garbage* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 11-12.
[90] John Carlin, "The National Archives and Record Administration: New Directions," address to the Association of Research Libraries, Washington, D.C., October 18-20, 1995. Transcript available at http://www.arl.org/resources/pubs/mmproceedings/127mmcarlin~print.shtml. Tom Nesmith, too, calls the idea of the archives as a hoard "a hardy stereotype." See "Seeing Archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives," *The American Archivist* 65:1 (Spring/Summer 2002), 24-41; 33.
[91] Richard Cox, *No Innocent Deposits: Forming Archives By Rethinking Appraisal* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2004), 27.

Cox distances his work from related but undesirable behavior through the rhetoric of moral judgment, disease, and insanity: popular collecting, for him, is like hoarding, a "bizarre" and "less-than-rational" "compulsion" to acquire items of no value. Yet laments and warning cries about being overwhelmed, hoarder-like, by the magnitude of one's possessions are a commonplace in the archival literature about appraisal. Terry Cook, for example, imagines archives being buried in an avalanche of case files:

> Case files are the most voluminous and routine documents produced by modern bureaucracies. In governments, businesses, universities and similar corporate bodies, they fill records offices and records centres to the brim. If acquired, they threaten to overwhelm archives everywhere with mountains of paper.[92]

Margaret Dixon similarly conjures up the image of uncontrollable excess when she asks her readers, "Overwhelmed by an overload of records? This has been the shared experience of archives worldwide in managing the vast amount of records created since the Second World War," while Jean-Pierre Wallot, then National Archivist of Canada, warned that "the question for archivists is how to deal with oceans of information in all media and still find, capture, and protect the small quantity that has archival value, while allowing the destruction of the great majority (95% at least) that has little or no value."[93] He imagines drowning in a surfeit of information unless it can be managed through

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[92] Terry Cook, "Many are Called but Few are Chosen: Appraisal Guidelines for Sampling and Selecting Case Files," *Archivaria* 32 (Summer 1991), 25-50; 25.

[93] Margaret Dixon, "Beyond Sampling: Returning to Macroappraisal for the Appraisal and Selection of Case Files," *Archival Science* 5 (2005), 285-313; 285; and Jean-Pierre Wallot, ''Building a 'Living Memory' For the History of Our Past: New Perspectives on Archival Appraisal,'' *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, New Series 2 (1991): 269–270; quoted in Dixon, 286.

appraisal; that is, by separating what has "archival value"—treasure—from what has "little or no value"—trash. Yet, as we have seen, and as many archivists acknowledge, determining value is a deeply fraught activity, and, moreover, as artifacts' meanings are diminished without the dirt from which they were excavated, so papers that are considered valueless in fact provide context for those that are assigned more value.[94] Many archivists, for example, are promoting sampling as a viable weapon against the crushing tide of documentation.[95] Sampling not only lends archives the scientific gravitas of statistical analysis, but also aligns archival work with archaeological enterprise, almost all of which, according to Clive Orton, "involves sampling; indeed, one could say that there is a sense in which much of archaeology *is* sampling."[96] However, as Terry Cook warns,

> To achieve statistical validity, it is highly desirable that a complete set of the records representing the entire population of the programme be available at the time the sample is taken. In other words, as formal sampling requires that all members of the population have an equal probability to be selected, the total population must be fixed and known.[97]

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[94] On archival bias, see Shauna McRanor, "A Critical Analysis of Intrinsic Value," *American Archivist* 59 (Fall 1996), 400-411; and Nancy Peace, "Deciding What to Save: Fifty Years of Theory and Practice," in *Archival Choices: Managing the Historial Record in an Age of Abundance*, ed. Nancy Peace (Lexington, MA: D.C. Health and Co., 1984).
[95] See, for example, Eleanor McKay, "Random Sampling Techniques: A Method of Reducing Large, Homogeneous Series in Congressional Papers," *The American Archivist* 41 (July 1978), 281-288; and Cook, "Many Are Called."
[96] Orton, *Sampling in Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1.
[97] Cook, "Many Are Called," 34.

That the entire corpus must be present in order for sampling to work, however, poses a problem for archivists, for whom the archives always threatens to metamophose into the hoard. Rubin's figure cannot exist without the ground; similarly, archives and museums cannot exist without the specter of the hoard. As Cox asks, "When *anything* is collectible, do contexts matter? When *everything* seems valuable, does any action leading to destruction of some records or the evidence of records really seem irreversible? When even garbage provides important clues to the past, does it matter whether archivists have done much more than randomly acquire interesting documentary debris?"[98] The threat Cox articulates of undifferentiated and overwhelming excess gives these institutions meaning, providing them with the ground against which they can situate their own identity.

Trying to separate collecting from hoarding is not only a futile but also reductive task that flattens these activities' rich and myriad meanings and implications. But even more, the effort to distinguish collecting from hoarding metaphorizes a wide range of other kinds of attempts to maintain porous boundaries even as the myriad and complex meanings of hoarding itself dissolve into an undifferentiated accumulation of unexamined assumptions. I do not argue that dirt should necessarily be as equally valued as treasure, either in a museum or in a person's home. Rather, I suggest that collecting is fundamentally an attempt to define and separate what does and does not have value; and examining this attempt, in a multitude of disciplines, can yield useful insights about those disciplines' endeavors and principles. Discarding the dirt, in both its literal and

[98] Cox, *No Innocent Deposits*, 29.

metaphorical senses, brushing it away and turning a blind eye to its existence, means missing out on the possibility of discovering, as Jessica Waldorf puts it, “buried treasure.”

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